

USDOL/OALJ Reporter

[95-ERA-12 Hamlett v. Babcock & Wilcox Company](#), 95-ERA-12 (Sec'y June 19, 1995)

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DATE: June 19, 1995
CASE NO. 95-ERA-12

IN THE MATTER OF

PATRICIA L. HAMLETT,

COMPLAINANT,

v.

BABCOCK AND WILCOX COMPANY,

RESPONDENT.

BEFORE: THE SECRETARY OF LABOR

FINAL ORDER APPROVING SETTLEMENT
AND DISMISSING COMPLAINT

This case arises under the employee protection provisions of the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 (ERA), as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 5851 (1988 and Supp. IV 1992). The Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) issued a decision recommending that the settlement be approved on May 15, 1995. The parties submitted a Settlement Agreement seeking approval of the settlement and dismissal of the complaint. Because the request for approval is based on the agreement entered into by the parties, I must review it to determine whether the terms are a fair, adequate and reasonable settlement of the complaint. 42 U.S.C. § 5851(b)(2)(A) (1988). *Macktal v. Secretary of Labor*, 923 F.2d 1150, 1153-54 (5th Cir. 1991); *Thompson v. U.S. Dep't of Labor*, 885 F.2d 551, 556 (9th Cir. 1989); *Fuchko and Yunker v. Georgia Power Co.*, Case Nos. 89-ERA-9, 89-ERA-10, Sec. Order, Mar. 23, 1989, slip op. at 1-2.

The agreement appears to encompass the settlement of matters arising under various laws, only one of which is the ERA. See ¶ 1. For the reasons set forth in *Poulos v. Ambassador Fuel Oil Co., Inc.*, Case No. 86-CAA-1, Sec. Ord., Nov. 2, 1987, slip op. at 2, I have limited my review of the agreement to determining whether its terms are a fair, adequate and reasonable settlement

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of the Complainant's allegations the Respondent violated the ERA.

Paragraph 6 provides that the parties shall keep the terms of the agreement confidential, but provides that the agreement is subject to the regulations of the U.S. Department of Labor and other applicable federal law. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552 (1988), requires Federal agencies to disclose requested records unless they are exempt from disclosure under the Act.[1] See *Debose v. Carolina Power & Light Co.*, Case No. 92-ERA-14, Ord. Disapproving Settlement and Remanding Case, Feb 7, 1994, slip op. at 2-3 and cases there cited.

Paragraph 8 provides that the agreement will be governed by the laws of Virginia, however, I construe this to except the authority of the Secretary of Labor and any Federal court which shall be governed in all respects by the laws and regulations of the United States. See *Phillips v. Citizens Ass'n for Sound Energy*, Case No. 91-ERA-25, Final Ord. of Dismissal, Nov. 4, 1991, slip op. at 2.

I find that the agreement, as here construed, is a fair, adequate and reasonable settlement of the complaint. Accordingly, I APPROVE the agreement and DISMISS THE COMPLAINT WITH PREJUDICE. See paragraph 1 of the settlement agreement.

SO ORDERED.

ROBERT B. REICH
Secretary of Labor

Washington, D.C.

[ENDNOTES]

[1] Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 70.26(b), submitters may designate specific information as confidential commercial information to be handled as provided in the regulations. When FOIA requests are received for such information, the Department of Labor will notify the submitter promptly, 29 C.F.R. § 70.26(c); the submitter will be given a reasonable amount of time to state its objections to disclosure, 29 C.F.R. § 70.26(e); and the submitter will be notified if a decision is made to disclose the information, 29 C.F.R. § 70.26(f). If the information is withheld and a suit is filed by the requester to compel disclosure, the submitter will be notified, 29 C.F.R. § 70.26(h).